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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0645
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0076

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 000076

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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO NSC FOR ADAM STERLING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: MFA LOOKS FORWARD TO JANUARY 26 NATO MINISTERIAL
DISCUSSION OF AFGHANISTAN AND KOSOVO

REF: A) STATE 4834 B) BUDAPEST 70 C) STATE 5652 D)

STATE 5256

Classified By: POL/C Eric V. Gaudiosi; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is an action message. Please see para xxx for action request.

12. (C) Ambassador Foley reviewed the latest USG thinking on Afghanistan and Kosovo with MFA Political Director Ivan Udvardi in preparation for the upcoming meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers in Brussels January 26.

AFGHANISTAN: HAPPY WITH PROGRESS; UNHAPPY WITH PROCESS

13. (C) Ambassador Foley outlined our objectives for ministerial discussion per ref a guidance, emphasizing the need to maintain the momentum from Riga. She particularly highlighted the importance of additional IC assistance, more robust counternarcotics efforts, and improved IC coordination. She made clear that the US is preparing to commit additional resources in Afghanistan, noted the recent shipment of Hungary's donation of over 20,000 assault rifles to Afghan Security Forces as a welcome example of the GoH's efforts. We are looking to Allies to do what they can in keeping with the priority and the urgency of the issue.

14. (C) Recently returned from a prolonged and serious bout of pneumonia, Udvardi made clear his intention to take the lead on Afghanistan in keeping with his responsibility for NATO and security issues. He expressed his dissatisfaction with efforts to coordinate all aspects of the PRT initiative thus far, confiding that the MFA had proposed to PM Gyurcsany that the Ministry take the lead on civilian implementation efforts. He noted that the MFA has had responsibility in fact but not authority in name thus far, and clearly wants the Ministry to be in a position to "task and not just ask" other agencies to act. He is hopeful the Prime Minister will be receptive to their appeal, and reiterated State Secretary Varkonyi's recent prediction that GoH projects will be on line in March (ref b). Although his health prohibits him from travelling for the time being, Udvardi was extremely receptive to our suggestion that the GoH build public support for the PRT mission by encouraging parliamentary and press visits to the PRT.

15. (C) With particular regard to the EU's police training mission in Afghanistan, Udvardi referred to ongoing discussion of ESDP considerations within the Union but emphasized the GoH's support for a flexible approach that would promote cooperation among international organizations on the ground.

16. (C) Udvardi applied the same pragmatic approach to

efforts to promote foreign participation in Hungary's PRT. He hopes the inclusion of military contingents from other nations in the PRT will pave the way for foreign NGO's to participate, reiterating Hungary's commitment to "do our best within our budgetary constraints." He expressed particular hope in the prospect of enlisting Czech and Serbian support, and has invited his Slovak counterpart to visit to discuss cooperation in Afghanistan as a way to "let some fresh air into our bilateral relationship."

KOSOVO: ON THE BORDER, ON THE SAME PAGE

17. (C) Turning to the Balkans, Udvardi noted that the GoH is watching developments in Kosovo closely. He expressed "frank concerns" about the current situation, emphasizing the importance of moving forward in a way that enforces rather than undermines regional stability. He cited recent US decisions, particularly our support for a PFP invitation to Serbia, as "very, very clever," and indicated that Hungary is pressing the EU to move forward on resuming SAA talks with Belgrade in order to avoid the "perfect storm" of "losing Kosovo and the prospect of European integration." Although he is cautiously optimistic regarding the upcoming elections in Serbia - and made a particular point of noting Budapest's strong ties to President Tadic - he warned that leaving Belgrade "punished and isolated" would have "decades of consequences." Udvardi also expressed concern over Moscow's attitude, stating that the IC must resist Russian efforts to use a Kosovo settlement as a "universal precedent."

18. (C) Udvardi welcomed the Ambassador's review of recent guidance (refs c and d), particularly our commitment to a continued civilian and military presence in Kosovo and to close US-EU coordination. He suggested further discussions on Kosovo in the weeks ahead, and specifically invited a

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high-level official from the Department to stop in Budapest for more detailed consultations. Speaking more in disappointment than in anger, he contrasted our openness with Special Envoy Ahtisaari's attitude, noting Ahtisaari's decision to "exclude" input from Hungary and other new EU member states. (Note: Udvardi provided a copy of a food-for-thought paper on the Balkans prepared in cooperation with Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia, which we have e-mailed to EUR/SCE. End Note.) "We support his efforts," Udvardi stressed, "but we believe we could have helped him ... and we know we'll have to live with the consequences."

19. (C) Comment: Udvardi's return gives the MFA a stronger hand in managing the Afghan and Balkan accounts. Known throughout their bureaucracy as an effective bureaucratic operator, he brings an open and results-oriented approach to the PRT, which has been hampered by weak management from the Prime Minister's Office. Although the MFA is making a concerted effort to take the lead, others tell us that the PM "never deals with personnel" and may be unlikely to make a change. Udvardi and the MFA will be further constrained by Hungary's budgetary situation, which leaves initiatives beyond their PRT dependent largely on international funding sources. On the Balkans, Udvardi has highlighted long-standing Hungarian concerns about instability in neighboring Serbia ... and disappointment over their perceived exclusion from international diplomatic efforts. That said, they recognize where we are headed on Kosovo, and we will continue to keep them closely briefed in the weeks ahead. End Comment.

110. (C) Action Request: Post strongly supports State Secretary Udvardi's invitation for a high-level Department

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official to visit Budapest for consultations with GoH
officials as we move forward on Kosovo status.

Minimize Considered.

FOLEY